

VZCZCXR02315
PP RUEHDBU RUEHPW RUEHSL
DE RUEHBUL #2139/01 2130343
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 010343Z AUG 09 ZDK
FM AMEMBASSY KABUL
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0465
INFO RUCNAFG/AFGHANISTAN COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KABUL 002139

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KDEM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [AF](#)

SUBJECT: GHANI & YASENI CAMPAIGNS' STRATEGIES AND CONCERNS:
THE VIEW FROM THIRD & FOURTH PLACE

REF: A. KABUL 2040

- [B.](#) KABUL 2120
- [C.](#) KABUL 1925
- [D.](#) KABUL 2018

¶11. (SBU) Summary: Common themes, particularly criticism of front-runners President Karzai and Dr. Abdullah Abdullah for practicing "warlord politics", were apparent in recent meetings with Ashraf Ghani campaign manager Saboor Formuli and Mirwais Yaseni campaign manager (and former Logar governor) Sayed Abdul Hashimi. Representing candidates widely perceived to hold third and fourth place respectively in the Afghan presidential race, both projected very active and nation-wide strategies of their candidates for the rest of the campaign period and expressed frustration with the Electoral Complaints Commission (ECC). End Summary.

Debate Aftermath

¶12. (SBU) In a July 27 meeting, Formuli was excited about Ghani's position in the aftermath of the July 23 presidential candidate debate (ref A). He asserted that in his perspective, Ghani had won the debate by clearly demonstrating that he is the candidate that had the best capacity and strategy to lead a progressive government. He said that Ghani's popularity is such that the candidate was forced to extend his planned one-day trip to Herat to over two-and-a-half days due to popular demand from tribal leaders and elders who wnetworks.

Reaching the People with the Campaign

¶15. (SBU) Formuli reported that Ghani plans to maintain a robust travel schedule for the duration of the campaign period, visiting Herat, Khost, Paktya, Bamyan, Dai Kundi, Helmand and Badakhshan. Around August 10, Ghani plans to stop provincial travel and focus his efforts in Kabul for the final stretch of the campaign period. He said that campaign staff had submitted a request to the Ministry of Defense to provide air transportation to Nuristan, Nangarhar and Laghman and although they had not received a response, he hoped to receive MOD support to visit those provinces. (COMMENT: We are tracking this request through IEC and MOD to determine its status. END COMMENT.)

KABUL 00002139 002 OF 002

¶16. (SBU) Yaseni's campaign is also focused on getting its message to the provinces. Although Yaseni has not requested MOD airlift for travel as he does not trust the Afghan National Army, he hopes to visit several provinces - he did not identify which - over a 10-day period. Hashimi noted that the campaign has reached out to civil society groups to

explain Karzai's corruption and abuses to the people.

Complaints, Concerns & Perspectives

¶17. (SBU) Hashimi and Formuli found common ground on several topics. They separately noted that their campaigns had filed multiple and as-yet-unanswered complaints with the ECC. Formuli cited 12 separate complaints filed by Ghani against actions of Karzai and members of the Abdullah campaign (a distinction from the candidate himself). He claimed that the ECC has not provided a response to any of the complaints.

¶18. (SBU) Hashimi and Formuli also expressed similar concerns about the possibility of the IEC opening fewer polling centers than originally planned (ref C). Their belief was that an election without full Pashtun participation would not result in a government acceptable to the people.

¶19. (SBU) Both placed their candidates among the "top three," competing with Karzai and Abdullah to reach a second round. Both asserted that Karzai would trump Abdullah in a second round because the Pashtuns would not support Abdullah. Hashimi applauded both Ghani and Yaseen for proceeding outside "traditional" politics without using illegal funding but noted that it placed limits on their potential success.

¶10. (SBU) Formuli claimed seven or eight of the amorphous "coalition of candidates" might break off to support Ghani within the next week and Hashimi derided the group as not serious and looking to barter for positions or cash, a common theme heard about the group (ref D). Both believed that the Afghan people were energized for the elections) in part because of the efforts of the international community, and the U.S. in particular, to ensure a debate about issues. Formuli said he thought the energy and interest would translate to voter turn-out around 50%, significantly higher than the 30-35% predicted by the Independent Election Commission's Deputy Chief Electoral Officer in June.

EIKENBERRY